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A Y L E S B U R Y  
I N T H E C O U N T Y O F  
B U C K S.

*By John*

*Wilkes.*

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L O N D O N.

Printed for Stuart Donaldson  
in the Strand.

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1764.

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 to the highest talents of gratitude my heart  
 thank you in my warmest thanks, and  
 privileges which are your right as English-  
 their property, and all those glorious  
 by contributing to my civil and libe-  
 supported laws of freedom, you confer  
 the very honorable name of a citizen.

## GENTLEMEN,

**T**he very honourable, unanimous, and repeated marks of esteem, you conferr'd on me, by committing to my trust your liberty, safety, property, and all those glorious privileges, which are your birth-right as Englishmen, entitle you to my warmest thanks, and to the highest tribute of gratitude my heart can pay. Yet in the peculiar circumstances of my case I think that I ought not at present to rest contented with thanking you. I have always found a true pleasure in submitting to you my parliamentary conduct. It is now more particularly my duty, and when I reflect on the real importance and interesting nature of those great events, in which, as your representative, I have been more immediately concern'd, I am exceedingly anxious not barely to justify myself, but to obtain the sanction of your approbation. It has ever been my ambition to approve myself worthy of the choice you have more than once made of me as your deputy to

the great council of the nation, with an unanimity equally honourable and endearing. The consciousness of having faithfully discharg'd my trust, of having acted an upright and steady part in Parliament, as well as in the most arduous circumstances, makes me dare to hope, that you will continue to me what I most value, the good opinion and friendship of my worthy constituents. Having the happiness of being born in a country, where the name of *vassal* is unknown, where MAGNA CHARTA is the inheritance of the subject, I have endeavour'd to support and merit those privileges, to which my birth gave me the clearest right. Secure as I am of fully justifying my conduct, cou'd I persuade myself, that I have acted up to the sacred ideas of liberty, which warm the hearts, and inspire the actions of my countrymen, I shou'd not, under all the variety of the most unjust and cruel persecutions, be quite unhappy.

The various charges brought against me may be reduc'd to two heads. The one is of a public, the other of a private nature. The first is grounded on the political paper of the *North Briton*, no. 43: the other respects a small part of a ludicrous poem, which was stolen out of my house. The two accusations are only so far connected, that I am convinc'd there is not a man in England, who believes that if the *first* had not appear'd, the *second* wou'd ever have been call'd in question.



The Majority in the House of Commons on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1763, Resolved, That the Paper, intituled, THE NORTH BRITON, n<sup>o</sup> 45, is a FALSE, SCANDALOUS, and SEDITIOUS LIBEL, containing Expressions of the most unexampled Insolence and Contumely towards his Majesty, the grossest Aspersions upon both Houses of Parliament, and the most audacious Defiance of the Authority of the whole Legislature, and most manifestly tending to alienate the Affections of the People from his Majesty, to withdraw them from their Obedience to the Laws of the Realm, and to excite them to traiterous Insurrections against His Majesty's Government. These are the words of the Resolution. I mean to examine them with some accuracy.

The first charge is, that *The North Briton* n<sup>o</sup> 45, is a FALSE Libel. The Resolution was mov'd by Lord North; yet in a tedious speech he did not attempt to dispute the veracity of any one paragraph in the whole paper. I was in my place during that debate, and took notice to the House that his Lordship had not said a word to prove the FALSITY of any one sentence, but I cou'd obtain no satisfaction, not even a reply, on that head. On my trial before Lord Mansfield, the word FALSE was omitted in the indictment, because I suppose the Court of King's Bench knew that I wou'd prove publicly on oath in that court, by the highest authorities, that every word in it was TRUE. The word FALSE is not to be found among the various epithets applied to this

Paper in either of the Warrants issued by Lord *Halifax*. I am bold to declare, upon the most carefull perusal of this Paper, that there is not any one particular advanc'd, which is not founded on fact, and that every line in it is strictly and scrupulously conformable to truth. I will not compliment the present profligate Majority in the *House of Commons* so far as to say, they were so well inform'd, that they knew the exact truth of every assertion in that Paper. One particular however came within their knowledge, the means by which it is hinted that the ENTIRE APPROBATION OF PARLIAMENT, even of the *Preliminary Articles* of the late inglorious Peace, was obtain'd, and the previous step to the obtaining that ENTIRE APPROBATION, the large debt contracted on the *Civil List*. They knew this assertion was extremely TRUE, and I am as ready to own that it was extremely SCANDALOUS.

The second charge of SCANDALOUS must then be admitted in it's full extent, still keeping in our view that it is TRUE. But to whom is it SCANDALOUS? To the Majority, who have sacrific'd the interests of the nation by giving the ENTIRE APPROBATION OF PARLIAMENT, of which so much parade is made in the *Speech*, to an act, which ought to have been follow'd by an impeachment. To the Minister, who made the late ignominious Peace, and in the very first year of it impos'd on us an intolerable *Excise*. To the worst of vipers in our bosom, to the *Tories*, who have never failed to

Support his unconstitutional measures, who have made us almost forget the infamy of their ancestors at *Utrecht*, by the greater sacrifices of the *Peace of Paris*. These are the objects of satire of a Paper, which deserved indeed the highest resentment of the *Majority*, because it had proclaim'd their disgrace, their *scandal*, thro' all Europe. It was very natural for these men no longer to suffer the *supposed* author to sit among them, and I shou'd have gloried in my *expulsion*, if it had not dissolv'd a political connection with my friends at *Aylesbury*, which did me real honour.

Another charge is, that the paper is a seditious libel, tending to withdraw the people from their Obedience to the Laws of the Realm, and to excite them to TRAITEROUS insurrections against His Majesty's Government. By the first Warrant, under which I was apprehended, *The North Briton*, n<sup>o</sup>. 45. was denominated a TREASONABLE Paper. In the second, by which I was committed to the Tower, that Word too was omitted, so that the greatest enemies of this paper seem to give up it's being either FALSE or TREASONABLE. Now the charge is varied by the *Majority* in the *House of Commons*, with all the little quibbling of attorneys. The paper is not TREASONABLE, but it tends to excite TRAITEROUS insurrections. It is remarkable that the epithet TRAITEROUS is here given to insurrection, as the *supposed* consequence of a *supposed* libel; whereas the *Scots*, who appear'd in

open rebellion so lately as 1745, were in the weekly writings against the *North Briton*, publish'd under the patronage of the *Scottish Minister*, and paid for by him out of the public treasure, only term'd *insurgents*, who defeated regular forces. Yet in fact no *insurrection of any kind* ever did, or cou'd, follow from this publication, even in those parts of the Kingdom so lately subjected to all the insolence and cruelty of the most despicable of our species, the mean, petty *Exciseman*. This is the strongest case, which can possibly be put. The *Excise* is the most abhorred monster, which ever sprung from arbitrary power, and the new mode of it is spoken of thro' this paper as the greatest grievance on the subject; yet even in this case, obedience to the laws and all lawfull authority is strictly enjoind, and no opposition, but what is consistent with the laws and the constitution, is allow'd. The words are very temperate, cautious and well guarded. Every *LEGAL attempt of a contrary tendency to the spirit of concord* will be deem'd a justifiable resistance, warranted by the spirit of the English constitution. Is this withdrawing the people from their obedience to the laws of the realm? Is resistance recommended, but expressly only so far as it is strictly *LEGAL*? Let the impartial public determine, whether this is the language of *SEDITION*, or can have the least tendency to excite *TRAITEROUS insurrections*, or whether the *House of Commons* have not made a false and groundless charge.



The general charge that *The North Briton*, no. 45, is a LIBEL, scarcely deserves an answer, because the term is vague, and still remains undefin'd by our law. Every man applies it to what he dislikes. A spirited *satire* will be deem'd a *libel* by a wicked Minister, and by a corrupt judge, who feel, or who dread the lash. In my opinion the rankest *libel* of modern times is the *false* and *fullsome Address* of the *Majority* in this *House of Commons* on the *Preliminary Articles*. They said that they had consider'd them with their *best attention*, they express'd the *strongest sentiments* of *gratitude*, they gave their *hearty applause*, they declar'd the *Peace* wou'd be *no less honourable than profitable, solid, and, in all human probability, permanent*. Were the *House of Commons* serious in this *Address*, which was drawn up and presented, even before any one of the gross blunders in the *Preliminaries* had been amended? If they were, the body of the people judg'd better, and did not hesitate to give their clear opinion, that the glories of the war were sacrific'd by an *inadequate* and *insecure PEACE*, which cou'd not fail of soon retrieving the affairs of *France*. Time has already prov'd that the nation judg'd right, and that the *PEACE* is in almost every part *infamous* and *rotten*, contrary to the vain boast in the *Minister's Speech* at the *beginning* of the same session, the *utmost care* has been taken to remove all occasions of future disputes between my subjects and those of *France* and *Spain*, and thereby



to add security and permanency to the blessings of PEACE: a declaration not believ'd by the nation at the time it was made; and since, from a variety of facts, known not to be founded on truth. The *North Briton* did not suffer the public to be misled: He acknowledg'd no *privileg'd vehicle of fallacy*. He consider'd the *liberty of the press* as the bulwark of all our liberties, as instituted to open the eyes of the people, and he seems to have thought it the duty of a political writer to follow truth where ever it leads. In his behalf I wou'd ask even Lord Mansfield, *can TRUTH be a LIBEL? Is it so in the King's Bench?* Tho' it has always found a cold and unwellcome reception from his Lordship, tho' it has thro' life prov'd much more his enemy than his friend, yet surely he has not been us'd to treat it as a *libel*. I do not know what the doctrine of the *King's Bench* now is, but I am sure that it will be a satisfactory answer to the honest part of mankind, who follow the dictates of sound sense, not the jargon of Law, nor the court flattery of venal Parliaments, that The *North Briton*, n<sup>o</sup>. 45, cannot be a LIBEL, because it does not in any one line deviate from truth.

This unlucky paper is likewise said to contain expressions of the most unexampled insolence and contumely towards his Majesty, most manifestly tending to alienate the Affections of the People from His Majesty, and by the hirings of the Ministry it is always in private charg'd

with PERSONAL disrespect to the King. It is however most certain that not a single word personally disrespectful to his Majesty is to be found in any part of it. On the contrary the sovereign is mention'd not only in terms of decency, but with that regard and reverence, which is due from a good subject to a good King. a Prince of so many great and amiable qualities, whom England truly reveres—the personal character of our present amiable Sovereign makes us easy and happy that so great a power is lodged in such hands. Are these the expressions of the most unexampled insolence and contumely toward his Majesty, which the Majority in this House of Commons have declar'd that it contains? Are these expressions most manifestly tending to alienate the Affections of the People from His Majesty? The Majority, who cou'd vote this, seem equally superior to any regard for truth, or modest fear of detection. The author of that paper, so far from making any personal attack on his Sovereign, has even vindicated him personally from some of the late measures, which were so severely censur'd by the judicious and unbiass'd Public. He exclaims with an honest indignation, what a shame was it to see the security of this country, in point of military force, complimented away, CONTRARY TO THE OPINION OF ROYALTY ITSELF, and sacrificed to the prejudices, and to the ignorance of a set of people, the most unfit from every consideration to be consulted on a matter relative to the security

of the House of Hanover? When the Speech is mention'd, when the various absurdities, and even fallacies of it, are held out to the nation, it is always call'd, in the language of Parliament, and of the constitution, the *Minister's Speech*, and the author declares that he doubts, *whether the imposition is greater on the sovereign, or on the nation*: so tender has he been of the honour of his Prince, so zealous in his vindication. The Minister is indeed every where treated with the contempt and indignation he has merited, but he is ever carefully distinguish'd from the sovereign. Every kingdom in the world has in it's turn found occasion to lament that Princes of the best intentions have been deceiv'd and misled by wicked and designing *Ministers and Favourites*. It has likewise in most countries been the fate of the few daring patriots, who have honestly endeavour'd to undeceive their sovereign, to feel the heaviest marks of his displeasure. It is however I think rather wonderful *amongus, even in these times*, that a paper, which contains the most dutiful expressions of regard to his Majesty, shou'd be treated with such unusual severity, and yet that so many other publications of the same date, full of the most deadly venom, shou'd pass totally unregarded. Some of these papers contain'd the most opprobrious reflections on that true patron of liberty, the late King, whose memory is embalm'd with the tears of *Englishmen*, while his ashes are rudely trampled upon by others, whom his godlike attri-

But of mercy had pardon'd the crime of unprovok'd rebellion. Others were full of the most indecent abuse on our great Protestant Ally, the *King of Prussia*, on the near relation of his present Majesty, who has merited so highly of the nation by fixing the crown in the House of *Hanover*, on the staunchest friends of freedom, the *City of London*, and on the first characters among us. Yet all these papers have pass'd unceusur'd by Ministers; Secretaries, and by the two *Houses of Parliament*.

There only remains one other charge, that the *North Briton*, N<sup>o</sup> 45, contains the grossest aspersions upon both Houses of Parliament, and the most audacious defiance of the AUTHORITY of the whole Legislature. It is to be lamented that the Majority of either House of Parliament should ever lay the just ground of any aspersion, or fall into general contempt with the people. We have seen their actions, and we know the mercenary motives of them. When the grossest aspersions are complain'd of, the question is, *have they been merited? Are they well founded?* It is in vain they talk of their authority. It is departed from them. Authority, which is founded on esteem and reverence, and is the constant attendant only of those who are believ'd to be good and virtuous, has long ago left them; but I must own their power still remains. We have seen to what unjustifiable lengths it has been carried, and a man, who is rash enough to make



an impotent and unavailing attack upon it, will soon find himself the unpitied victim. All thinking men are full of apprehensions at the approach of their meeting, and the nation impatiently expects the allotted term of resuming a power they have so shamefully abus'd, by setting aside those, who have ignominiously betray'd their trust, and have made the noblest blood of our heroes be spilt almost in vain. Under the *arbitrary Stuarts*, when our more than *Roman* Senates dar'd to bring *truth* to the foot of the throne, and made the trembling tyrant obey her sacred voice, the nation was in love with Parliaments, because they were the steady friends of liberty, and never met but in favour of the subject to redress real grievances. Now we are alarm'd at every approaching *session*, because we know that a corrupt *Majority* only assemble to make their own terms with the Minister, to load their fellow subjects with the most partial taxes, in order to pay the amazing number of useless places and pensions, created only to prevent their *mutiny or desertion*, or to surrender to the crown those *privileges* of Parliament, which were extorted from former *prerogative princes* for the safety of the people, and I fear they meet to forge fetters for themselves and their posterity.

I have thus, Gentlemen, gone thro' all the objections made against this paper, which is certainly innocent, perhaps meritorious, only to shew the extreme injustice of the treatment I experienc'd, as the *supposed* author. The



Most cruel orders were given by the deceased Secretary of state, to drag me out of my bed at midnight. A good deal of humanity, and some share of timidity, prevented the execution of such ruffian-like commands. I was made a prisoner in my own house by several of the King's messengers, who only produc'd a *General Warrant* issued without oath, neither naming, nor describing me. I therefore refus'd to obey a warrant, which I knew to be illegal. I was however by violence carried before the Earls of *Egremont* and *Hatifax*, who thought it worth their while to ask me a tolerable number of plain questions, to not one of which I thought it worth my while to give a plain answer. It is no small satisfaction to me now to know, that I have not a friend in the world, who wishes a single word *unsaid* by me in the critical moment of that examination. I inform'd their Lordships of the orders actually given by the *Court of Common Pleas* for my *Habeas Corpus*, notwithstanding which I was committed to the Tower, the custody of me shifted into other hands, and that act for the liberty of the subject eluded. Altho' the offense of which I stood accus'd, was undoubtedly *bailable*, yet for three days every person was refus'd admittance to me, and the Governor was oblig'd to treat me in a manner very different from the great humanity of his nature, for he had receiv'd orders to consider me as a *close* prisoner. I rejoice that I can say, I am the only instance of such rigorous

treatment since the accession of the mild House of Brunswick, altho' the Tower has twice been crouded even with rebels from the Northern parts of the Island; and therefore I shall continue to regret the wretched and cowardly policy, the indecent partiality, and even injustice, of conferring on Scotsmen All the governments of the few conquests not tamely given up by the Scottish Minister, conquests won by the valour of the united forces of England, Scotland and Ireland. While I suffer'd this harsh confinement, my house in Great George Street was plunder'd, all my papers were seiz'd, and some of a very nice and delicate nature, not bearing the most distant relation to the affairs of government, were divulg'd, as if Administration were determin'd to shew, that men, who had violated *public justice*, were incapable of *private honour*.

Two days previous to my being heard before a court of Justice, I had the grief to find that my enemies had prevail'd on his Majesty to shew me a public mark of his displeasure, by superseding me as Colonel of the Regiment of my own county, without any complaint against me, which cou'd not but give such a step the very unconstitutional appearance of *influencing* or *intimidating* my judges. When I was brought before the court of *Common Pleas*, I pleaded the *cause of universal liberty*. It was not the cause of

Peers and Gentlemen only, but of all the middling and inferior class of people, who stand most in need of protection, which I observ'd was on that day the great question before the court. I was discharg'd from imprisonment by the unanimous sentence of my judges, without giving any bail or security. On the first day of the meeting of Parliament, I humbly submitted my grievances to the House of Commons, as they were chosen to be the guardians of the liberties of the people against the despotism of ministers. I likewise voluntarily enter'd my appearance to the actions brought at law against me, as soon as I knew the determination of the Majority, that all the irregularities against me shou'd be justified, and that no privilege shou'd be allow'd in my case, even as to the mode of proceeding, which was the most harsh the rancour of party cou'd devise.

The first charge exhibited against me was for being the author of the *North Briton*, N<sup>o</sup> 45, and I was expell'd the House of Commons on that charge, after a loose examination at their bar of witnesses without oath. The judicial proceedings against me, as the supposed author, were however drop'd, and I was afterwards try'd in the King's Bench only for the republication of it. If the charge against me as author was just, and cou'd be supported on oath, why was I not tried at law on that charge? If the charge was unjust, and

cou'd not be supported *on oath*, why was I  
*expell'd*? If the *republication* is a crime, it  
 was publickly committed by the printers of  
 several newspapers, who still remain unnotic'd,  
 altho' their names appear to their several papers.  
 This is surely a glaring proof of the greatest par-  
 tiality. My personal enemy, *Lord Mansfield*, chose  
 to try both the causes against me, that he might  
 in the most dastardly manner, under the colour  
 of law, avenge the attack made on those known  
 political principles of his, so inconsistent with the  
 glorious *Revolution*, on the rooted attachment of  
 himself and his nearest relations to the *Stuart* fa-  
 mily, on his partiality in the seat of justice, &c.  
 &c. which seem to have been favourite topics in  
 the *North Briton*, and other political papers, of  
 which his Lordship did me the honour to name  
 me as the author. This had long rankled in his  
 heart, and now the fairest opportunity of revenge  
 presented itself. Having carefully studied the  
*records*, and finding that they did not insure the  
 certainty he wish'd of my conviction, on the eve-  
 ning preceeding the trials, he sent for my *solici-*  
*tor* TO HIS OWN HOUSE, and desir'd him to consent  
 to the alterations his Lordship propos'd in both  
 the causes, that of the *North Briton*, n<sup>o</sup>. 45, and  
 of the *Essay on Woman*. The Chief Justice sunk  
 into the crafty attorney, and made himself a par-  
 ty against the person accus'd before him as judge,  
 when he ought to have presum'd me innocent.  
 My *solicitor* refus'd, and against his consent



*the records were there materially alter'd by his Lordship's express orders, so that I was tried on two new charges, very different from those I had answer'd. This is, I believe, the most daring violation of the rights of Englishmen, which has been committed by any judge since the time of Jeffries; yet this arbitrary Scottish Chief Justice still remains unimpeach'd-except in the hearts of the whole nation. Several of the Jury were by counter-notices, sign'd Summoning Officer, prevented from attending on the day appointed for the trial, while others had not only private notice given them of the real day, but likewise instructions for their behaviour. To crown the whole, Lord Mansfield in his charge tortur'd both the law and the fact so grossly, that the audience were shock'd no less at the indecency than at the partiality of his conduct. I was during all this time very dangerously ill with my daughter at Paris, absolutely incapable of making any personal defence, and indeed totally ignorant of the two new questions, on which I was to be tried.*

*The Majority in the House of Commons had in this interval grown so impatient for revenge, that they wou'd not wait to see, if I shou'd be intrangled in the nice meshes of the curious Mansfield net, which was to be spread for me. They voted my expulsion, while I was confined to my bed at Paris, altho' I had sent to their Speaker the*



most authentic proof of my absolute inability to attend their summons, and had only desir'd a short delay. Humanity pleaded my cause in vain. The corrupt and canker'd hearts of those men, which had been shut against justice, were not open to pity. They were steel'd against compassion, but I am sure they will feel remorse.

I now proceed to the other charge brought against me, which respects an idle poem, call'd an ESSAY ON WOMAN, and a few other detach'd verses. If so much had not been said on this subject, I shou'd be superior to entering upon any justification of myself, because I will always maintain the right of private opinion in it's fullest extent, when it is not follow'd by giving any open, public offense to any establishment, or indeed to any individual. The crime commences from thence, and the magistrate has a right to interpose, and even to punish outrageous and indecent attacks on what any community has decreed to be sacred. Not only the rules of good breeding, but the laws of society, are then infring'd. In my own closet I had a right to examine, and even to try by the keen edge of ridicule, any opinions I pleas'd. If I have laugh'd pretty freely at the glaring absurdities of the most monstrous creed, which was ever attempted to be impos'd on the credulity of christians, a creed which our great Tillotson wish'd THE CHURCH OF

ENGLAND WAS FAIRLY RID OF, it was in private I laugh'd, I am not the first good protestant, who has amus'd himself with the egregious nonsense, and silly conceits, of that strange, perplex'd and perplexing mortal, that *saint* of more admirable swallow and more happy digestion than any of the tribe, *Athanasius*. I gave however no offence to any one individual of the community. The fact is, that after the affair of the NORTH BRITON, the government brib'd one of my servants to *steal* a part of the ESSAY ON WOMAN, and the other pieces, out of my house. Not quite a *fourth* part of the volume had been printed at my own private press. The work had been discontinued for several months, before I had the least knowledge of the theft. Of that *fourth* part only twelve copies were work'd off, and I never gave one of those copies to any friend. In this infamous manner did government get possession of this new subject of accusation, and, except in the case of *Algernon Sydney*, of this new species of crime; for a *Stuart* only cou'd make the refinement in tyranny of ransacking and robbing the recesses of closets and studies in order to convert private amusements into state crimes. After the servant had been brib'd to commit the theft in his master's house, the most abandon'd man of the age, who in this virtuous reign had risen to be secretary of state, was brib'd to make a complaint to the House of Lords that I had publish'd

an infamous *Poem*, which no man there had ever seen. It was read before that great assembly of grave lords and pious prelates, excellent judges of wit and poetry, and was order'd to lie on the table, for the Clerks of the House to copy, and to PUBLISH thro' the nation. The whole of this proceeding was I own a public insult on order and decency, but it was committed by the *House of Lords*, not by the accus'd member of the House of Commons. The neat, prim, smirking *Chaplain* of that babe of grace, that gude cheeld of the prudish kirk of Scotland, the *Earl of March*, was highly offended at my having made an *essay on woman*. His nature cou'd not forgive me that INEFFABLE crime, and his own conduct did not afford me the shadow of an apology. In great wrath he drew his grey goose quill against me. The pious peer caught the alarm, and they both pour'd forth most wo-full lamentations, their tender hearts overwhelm'd with grief, or as the *Chaplain*, who held the pen, said, with GRIEFS OF GRIEFS. He proceeded to make very unfair extracts, and afterwards to be-note them in the foulest manner. The most vile blasphemies were forg'd, and publish'd as part of a work, which in reality contain'd nothing but fair ridicule on some doctrines I cou'd not believe, mock panegyrick flowing from mere envy, which sicken'd at the superior parts and abilities, as well as wondrous deeds of a man I

cou'd not love, a few portraits drawn from warm life, with the too high colouring of a youthfull fancy, and two or three descriptions, perhaps too luscious, which tho' NATURE and WOMAN might pardon, a *Kidgell* and a *Mansfield* cou'd not fail to condemn.

I have now, Gentlemen, gone thro' all the objections, which have been made to my conduct in a *public* capacity. My enemies finding that I was invulnerable, where they pointed their most envenom'd darts, afterwards attempted to assassinate my private character, and propagated an infinite variety of groundless calumnies against me. I have generally treated these with the contempt they deserv'd, from the certainty that all who knew me, wou'd know that I was incapable of the things laid to my charge. A few falsehoods advanc'd with more boldness than the rest, I was at the pains to refute. The *Winchester* story in particular, because it respected *Lord Bute's* own son, and had been usher'd to the public with the greatest parade, as well as with all the impudence of malice, and rage of party, I disprov'd so fully, that I am sure not the least shadow of a doubt remain'd in any man's mind as to my entire innocence of that most illiberal charge. I have liv'd so long among you, Gentlemen, that I will rest every thing respecting me as a private man to the testimony, which the experience of so many years authorizes you to



give, well knowing that true candour always weighs in the same balance faults and virtues. The *shades* in private life are darken'd by an enemy, but scarcely seen by a friend. Besides it is not given to every man to be as *pious* as Lord *Sandwich*, or as *chaste*, in and out of the marriage bed, in all thought, word, and deed, as the *Bishop of Gloucester*.

A few other particulars, Gentlemen, deserve to be mention'd, that you may have before you the whole of my conduct in these interesting affairs. Immediately after the late flagrant breach of the laws, I thought it my duty to the community to commence actions against all the persons guilty, I despis'd the meanness of attacking only agents and deputies. I endeavour'd to bring to the jurisdiction of the law, the *principals*, the first and great offenders, the *two secretaries of state*. I blush for my country, when I add that tho I have employ'd the ablest gentlemen of the profession, they have hitherto found it impossible even to force an appearance, Lord *Egremont* died, braving the justice of his country. Lord *Halifax* lives, perhaps to triumph over it, and to give the example to future secretaries of committing the grossest violation of the rights of the Commons with impunity. The judicial proceeding at my suit commenc'd in the beginning of may twelvemonth, and now at the end of october in the present year, his Lordship has not enter'd any appearance,  
seeking

seeking shelter all the winter under *Privilege*, all the summer under the *chicane* of law. The little offenders indeed have not escap'd. Several honest juries have mark'd them with ignominy, and their guilt has been follow'd with legal punishment. But what is of infinitely greater importance to the nation, we have heard from the Bench, that GENERAL WARRANTS ARE ABSOLUTELY ILLEGAL. Such a declaration is now become in the highest degree interesting to the subject, because the Majority in this courtly House of Commons refus'd, the very last winter, to come to any resolution in favour of the rights of their fellow subjects. We owe it likewise to the most upright, independent, and intrepid Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, that in the action against the under Secretary of state, Mr Wood, THE SEIZURE OF PAPERS, except in cases of High Treason, has been declar'd ILLEGAL.

When I reflect on these two most important determinations in favour of *liberty*, the best cause, and the noblest stake, for which men can contend, I congratulate my free-born countrymen, and am full of gratitude that heaven inspir'd me with a firmness and fortitude equal to the conduct of so arduous a business. Under all the wanton cruelties of usurp'd and abus'd power, the goodness of the cause supported me, and I never lost sight of the great object, which I had from the first in my view, the preservation of the rights and privileges of every *Englishman*. I glory in the

name, and will never forget the duties resulting from it. Tho' I am driven into exile from my dear country, I shall never cease to love and reverence it's constitution, while it remains free. It will continue my first ambition to approve myself a faithfull son of *England*, and I shall always be ready to give my life a willing sacrifice to my native country, and to what it holds most dear, the security of our invaluable liberties. While I live, I shall enjoy the satisfaction of thinking that I have not liv'd in vain, that the present age has borne the noblest testimony to me, and that my name will pass with honour to posterity, for the upright and disinterested part I have acted, and for my unwearied endeavours to protect and secure the persons, houses, and papers, of my fellow-subjects from arbitrary visits and seizures.

I am,

GENTLEMEN,

With much regard and affection,  
your most obliged, and  
obedient humble servant,

Paris Oct. 22. 1764.

JOHN WILKES.

